

If we are to make the most of the education that you have worked so hard to give to the children of Italian immigrants, then we truly must work just as hard to embody the values by which you have lived and through which you have found a true home in the United States.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:42 p.m. in the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Paul S. Polo, president, and Philip R. Piccigallo, national executive director, Sons of Italy Foundation; Malcolm S. (Steve) Forbes, Jr., publisher, Forbes magazine; Thomas M. Foglietta, U.S. Ambassador to Italy; Ferdinando Salleo, Italian Ambassador to the United States; entertainer Regis Philbin, who introduced the President; singer Tony Bennett; and Philip Guarascio, vice president and general manager, advertising and marketing, North American Division of General Motors Corp.

**Commencement Address at the
United States Naval Academy in
Annapolis, Maryland
May 22, 1998**

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. Secretary Dalton, thank you for your generous introduction and your dedicated service. Admiral Larson, thank you. Admiral Johnson, General Krulak, Admiral Ryan, Board of Visitors Chair Byron; to the faculty and staff of the Academy; distinguished guests; to proud parents and family members, and especially to the Brigade of Midshipmen: I am honored to be here today. And pursuant to longstanding tradition, I bring with me a small gift. I hereby free all midshipmen who are on restriction for minor conduct offenses. [Applause] There was so much enthusiasm, I wonder if you heard the word, "minor" offenses. [Laughter]

You know, the President has the signal honor of addressing all of our service academies serially, one after the other in appropriate order. This is the second time I have had the great honor of being here at the Naval Academy. But I began to worry about my sense of timing. I mean, what can you say to graduating midshipmen in a year when the most famous ship on Earth is again the

Titanic? [Laughter] But then I learned this is a totally, almost blindly, confident bunch. After all, over in King Hall you eat cannonballs. [Laughter] Now, for those of you who don't know what they are, they're not the ones Francis Scott Key saw flying over Fort McHenry; they're just huge apple dumplings. Nonetheless, they require a lot of confidence. [Laughter]

I will try to be relatively brief today. I was given only one instruction: I should not take as long as your class took to scale Herndon Monument. Now, at 4 hours and 5 minutes, the slowest time in recorded history, I have a lot of leeway. [Laughter]

But you have more than made up for it. You have done great things, succeeding in a rigorous academic environment, trained to be superb officers. You have done extraordinary volunteer work, for which I am personally very grateful. In basketball, you made it to the NCAA's for the second time in a row. You defeated Army in football last year. In fact, you were 26–6 against teams from Army this year. And while I must remain neutral in these things—[laughter]—I salute your accomplishments. [Laughter]

Let me also join the remarks that Secretary Dalton made in congratulating your Superintendent. Admiral Larson has performed remarkable service as an aviator, submarine commander, Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific, twice at the helm of the Academy. I got to know him well when he was our Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific. I came to appreciate more than I otherwise ever could have his unique blend of intelligence and insight and character and passionate devotion to duty.

In view of the incident on the Indian subcontinent in the last few days, I think it's important for the historical record to note that the first senior official of the United States who told me that there was a serious potential problem there and we had better get ready for it was Admiral Chuck Larson, several years ago.

When I asked him to return to the Academy, I thought it was almost too much, and then I realized it might have been too little, for he loves this Academy so much this is hardly tough duty. He met all its challenges.

He taught you midshipmen to strive for excellence without arrogance, to maintain the highest ethical standards. Admiral, on behalf of the American people, I thank you for your service here, your 40 years in the Navy, your devotion to the United States. We are all very grateful to you.

I also have every confidence that Admiral Ryan is a worthy successor, and I wish him well.

As I speak to you and other graduates this spring, I want to ask you to think about the challenges we face as a nation in the century that is just upon us and how our mission must be to adapt to the changes of changing times while holding fast to our enduring ideals. In the coming weeks, I will talk about how the information revolution can widen the circle of opportunity or deepen inequality, about how immigration and our Nation's growing diversity can strengthen and unite America or weaken and divide it.

But nothing I will have the chance to talk about this spring is more important than the mission I charge you with today, the timeless mission of our men and women in uniform: protecting our Nation and upholding our values in the face of the changing threats that are as new as the new century.

Members of the Class of 1998, you leave the Yard at the dawn of a new millennium, in a time of great hope. Around the world people are embracing peace, freedom, free markets. More and more nations are committed to educating all their children and stopping the destruction of our environment. The information revolution is sparking economic growth and spreading the ideas of freedom around the world. Technology is moving so fast today that the top-of-the line, high-speed computers you received as plebes today are virtually museum pieces. *[Laughter]*

In this world, our country is blessed with peace, prosperity, declining social ills. But today's possibilities are not tomorrow's guarantees.

Just last week, India conducted a series of nuclear explosive tests, reminding us that technology is not always a force for good. India's action threatens the stability of Asia and challenges the firm international consensus to stop all nuclear testing. So again I ask India to halt its nuclear weapons program

and join the 149 other nations that have already signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. And I ask Pakistan to exercise restraint, to avoid a perilous nuclear arms race.

This specter of a dangerous rivalry in South Asia is but one of the many signs that we must remain strong and vigilant against the kinds of threats we have seen already throughout the 20th century, regional aggression and competition, bloody civil wars, efforts to overthrow democracies.

But also, our security is challenged increasingly by nontraditional threats, from adversaries both old and new, not only hostile regimes but also terrorists and international criminals, who cannot defeat us in traditional theaters of battle but search instead for new ways to attack, by exploiting new technologies and the world's increasing openness.

As we approach the 21st century, our foes have extended the fields of battle, from physical space to cyberspace; from the world's vast bodies of water to the complex workings of our own human bodies. Rather than invading our beaches or launching bombers, these adversaries may attempt cyberattacks against our critical military systems and our economic base. Or they may deploy compact and relatively cheap weapons of mass destruction, not just nuclear but also chemical or biological, to use disease as a weapon of war. Sometimes the terrorists and criminals act alone. But increasingly, they are interconnected, and sometimes supported by hostile countries.

If our children are to grow up safe and free, we must approach these new 21st century threats with the same rigor and determination we applied to the toughest security challenges of this century. We are taking strong steps against these threats today. We've improved antiterrorism cooperation with other countries; tightened security for our troops, our diplomats, our air travelers; strengthened sanctions on nations that support terrorists; given our law enforcement agencies new tools. We broke up terrorist rings before they could attack New York's Holland Tunnel, the United Nations, and our airlines. We have captured and brought to justice many of the offenders.

But we must do more. Last week, I announced America's first comprehensive strategy to control international crime and bring criminals, terrorists, and money launderers to justice. Today, I come before you to announce three new initiatives: the first broadly directed at combating terrorism; the other two addressing two potential threats from terrorists and hostile nations, attacks on our computer networks and other critical systems upon which our society depends, and attacks using biological weapons. On all of these efforts, we will need the help of the Navy and the Marines. Your service will be critical in combating these new challenges.

To make these three initiatives work we must have the concerted efforts of a whole range of Federal agencies, from the Armed Forces to law enforcement to intelligence to public health. I am appointing a National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Counterterrorism, to bring the full force of all our resources to bear swiftly and effectively.

First, we will use our new integrated approach to intensify the fight against all forms of terrorism: to capture terrorists, no matter where they hide; to work with other nations to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries overseas; to respond rapidly and effectively to protect Americans from terrorism at home and abroad.

Second, we will launch a comprehensive plan to detect, deter, and defend against attacks on our critical infrastructures, our power systems, water supplies, police, fire, and medical services, air traffic control, financial services, telephone systems, and computer networks.

Just 15 years ago, these infrastructures—some within government, some in the private sector—were separate and distinct. Now, they are linked together over vast computer-electronic networks, greatly increasing our productivity but also making us much more vulnerable to disruption. Three days ago, we saw the enormous impact of a single failed electronic link when a satellite malfunction disabled pagers, ATM's, credit card systems, and TV and radio networks all around the world. Beyond such accidents, intentional attacks against our critical systems already are underway. Hackers break into government

and business computers. They can raid banks, run up credit card charges, extort money by threats to unleash computer viruses.

If we fail to take strong action, then terrorists, criminals, and hostile regimes could invade and paralyze these vital systems, disrupting commerce, threatening health, weakening our capacity to function in a crisis. In response to these concerns, I established a commission chaired by retired General Tom Marsh, to assess the vulnerability of our critical infrastructures. They returned with a pointed conclusion: Our vulnerability, particularly to cyberattacks, is real and growing. And they made important recommendations that we will now implement to put us ahead of the danger curve.

We have the best trained, best equipped, best prepared Armed Forces in history. But as ever, we must be ready to fight the next war, not the last one. And our military, as strong as it is, cannot meet these challenges alone. Because so many key components of our society are operated by the private sector, we must create a genuine public-private partnership to protect America in the 21st century. Together, we can find and reduce the vulnerabilities to attack in all critical sectors, develop warning systems including a national center to alert us to attacks, increase our cooperation with friendly nations, and create the means to minimize damage and rapidly recover in the event attacks occur. We can and we must make these critical systems more secure, so that we can be more secure.

Third, we will undertake a concerted effort to prevent the spread and use of biological weapons and to protect our people in the event these terrible weapons are ever unleashed by a rogue state, a terrorist group, or an international criminal organization. Conventional military force will continue to be crucial to curbing weapons of mass destruction. In the confrontation against Iraq, deployment of our Navy and Marine forces has played a key role in helping to convince Saddam Hussein to accept United Nations inspections of his weapons facilities.

But we must pursue the fight against biological weapons on many fronts. We must strengthen the international Biological

Weapons Convention with a strong system of inspections to detect and prevent cheating. This is a major priority. It was part of my State of the Union Address earlier this year, and we are working with other nations and our industries to make it happen.

Because our troops serve on the front line of freedom, we must take special care to protect them. So we have been working on vaccinating them against biological threats, and now we will inoculate all our Armed Forces, active duty and reserves, against deadly anthrax bacteria.

Finally, we must do more to protect our civilian population from biological weapons. The Defense Department has been teaching State and local officials to respond if the weapons are brandished or used. Today it is announcing plans to train National Guard and reserve elements in every region to address this challenge. But again, we must do more to protect our people. We must be able to recognize a biological attack quickly in order to stop its spread.

We will work to upgrade our public health systems for detection and warning, to aid our preparedness against terrorism, and to help us cope with infectious diseases that arise in nature. We will train and equip local authorities throughout the Nation to deal with an emergency involving weapons of mass destruction, creating stockpiles of medicines and vaccines to protect our civilian population against the kind of biological agents our adversaries are most likely to obtain or develop. And we will pursue research and development to create the next generation of vaccines, medicines, and diagnostic tools. The human genome project will be very, very important in this regard. And again, it will aid us also in fighting infectious diseases.

We must not cede the cutting edge of biotechnology to those who would do us harm. Working with the Congress, America must maintain its leadership in research and development. It is critical to our national security.

In our efforts to battle terrorism and cyberattacks and biological weapons, all of us must be extremely aggressive. But we must also be careful to uphold privacy rights and other constitutional protections. We do not ever undermine freedom in the name of freedom.

To the men and women of this Class of 1998, over 4 years you have become part of an institution, the Navy, that has repeatedly risen to the challenges of battle and of changing technology. In the Spanish-American War, 100 years ago, our Navy won the key confrontations at Manila Bay and off Cuba. In the years between the World Wars, the Navy made tremendous innovations with respect to aircraft carriers and amphibious operations. In the decisive battle in the Pacific in World War II at Midway, our communications experts and code breakers obtained and Admiral Nimitz seized on crucial information about the enemy fleet that secured victory against overwhelming odds.

In the cold war, nuclear propulsion revolutionized our carrier and submarine operations. And today, our Navy and Marine Corps are fundamental to our strategy of global engagement, aiding our friends and warning foes that they cannot undermine our efforts to build a just, peaceful, free future.

President Theodore Roosevelt put it succinctly a long time ago. "A good Navy," he said, "is the surest guaranty of peace." We will have that good Navy, because of you. Your readiness, strength, your knowledge of science and technology, your ability to promptly find and use essential information, and above all, your strength of spirit and your core values, honor, courage, and commitment. I ask you to remember, though, that with these new challenges especially, we must all, as Americans, be united in purpose and spirit.

Our defense has always drawn on the best of our entire Nation. The Armed Forces have defended our freedom, and in turn, freedom has allowed our people to thrive. Our security innovations have often been sparked and supported over and over by the brilliance and drive of people in non-military sectors, our businesses and universities, our scientists and technologists. Now, more than ever, we need the broad support and participation of our citizens as your partners in meeting the security challenges of the 21st century.

Members of the Class of 1998, you are just moments away from becoming ensigns and second lieutenants, and I have not taken as much time as you did to climb the Monument. [Laughter] I thank you for giving me

a few moments of your attention to talk to you and our Nation about the work you will be doing for them for the rest of your careers. You will be our guardians and champions of freedom.

Let me say just one thing in closing on a more personal note. We must protect our people from danger and keep America safe and free. But I hope you will never lose sight of why we are doing it. We are doing it so that all of your country men and women can live meaningful lives, according to their own lights. So work hard, but don't forget to pursue also what fulfills you as people, the beauty of the natural world, literature, the arts, sports, volunteer service. Most of all, don't forget to take time for your personal lives, to show your love to your friends and, most of all, to your families, the parents and grandparents who made the sacrifices to get you here, in the future, your wives, your husbands, and your children.

In a free society, the purpose of public service, in or out of uniform, is to provide all citizens with the freedom and opportunity to live their own dreams. So when you return from an exhausting deployment or just a terrible day, never forget to cherish your loved ones, and always be grateful that you have been given the opportunity to serve, to protect for yourselves and for your loved ones and for your fellow Americans the precious things that make life worth living, and freedom worth defending.

I know your families are very proud of you today. Now go and make America proud.

Good luck, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 a.m. in the Navy/Marine Corps Memorial Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Charles Larson, USN, Superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy; Adm. Jay Johnson, USN, Chief of Naval Operations; Gen. Charles Krulak, USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps; Vice Adm. John R. Ryan, USN, incoming Superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy; Beverly Byron, Chair, U.S. Naval Academy Board of Visitors; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks on the Proposed “Building Efficient Surface Transportation and Equity Act” and an Exchange With Reporters

May 22, 1998

The President. Today Congress will take an important step toward preserving and expanding our prosperity in the new century. I am pleased that Congress likely will answer my call to pass a historic bill to strengthen our transportation system and maintain our commitment to fiscal discipline and investing in our people. It is a bill that will help our communities to modernize and build the roads and bridges, the railways and buses that link people of our great and vast country together, that keep our economy strong and vibrant.

I have said I would strongly support legislation that meets my core principles: First, it must keep our budget balanced, must preserve the budget surplus until we have saved Social Security first; and then it must not undermine other national priorities, including education, health care, child care, and the environment.

The bill being considered by the Congress this afternoon meets those principles. The measure does spend more than we wanted, but I am pleased that we have persuaded Congress to cut \$17 billion of excess spending from this bill. Therefore, we have reached, what I consider to be, a principled compromise. At the same time, the bill fulfills the transportation priorities I set forth in my balanced budget. It strengthens our commitments to encouraging mass transit, to protecting the environment, to expanding opportunities to disadvantaged businesses, to moving more Americans from welfare to work with transportation assistance.

But I am deeply disappointed by one thing that is missing from the bill. Congress has refused to lower the national drunk driving standard to .08 percent blood alcohol content. We must have zero tolerance for irresponsible and reckless acts that endanger our children and loved ones traveling on our